

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3, 6-15, 18, and 19 are pending in this application. Claims 1 and 18 are amended. No new matter is added by these amendments. Claims 21 and 22 are canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. In particular, the features of claims 21 and 22 have been incorporated into independent claims 1 and 18. Reconsideration of this application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Applicants appreciate the Office Action's indication that claims 11-15 contain allowable subject matter.

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 3, 6-8, 10 and 21-22 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 3,666,262 to Fowler et al. (hereinafter "Fowler") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,073,927 to Sako et al. (hereinafter "Sako"). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 1 calls for the drive roller and the driven roller disposed at the immediate downstream side from the reading point are the first rollers to nip the sheet after the sheet passes the reading point and a nip portion between the drive roller and the driven roller contacts a leading edge of the sheet substantially at a point of the sheet when the sheet passes through the reading point and the leading edge of the sheet collides against the nip portion.

Fowler discloses a magnetic card transport having a read amplifier 37, drive rollers 8, 9 and 10 and associated drive rollers 3, 4 and 5 (*see* Figs. 1 and 3a and 3b; col. 2, lines 64-67 and col. 4, lines 14-38). The Office Action asserts that the read amplifier 37 corresponds to the claimed image reading part, that the drive rollers 8, 9 and 10 correspond to the claimed driven rollers and that the associated drive rollers 3, 4 and 5 correspond to the claimed drive rollers. However, Fowler is silent with regard to whether the nip portion of drive rollers 8, 9

and 10 and associated drive rollers 3, 4 and 5 contacts the leading edge of the card while the reading operation of the card is still in progress.

Furthermore, Sako fails to overcome the deficiencies of Fowler, and is only cited as allegedly disclosing a coefficient of friction of an outer layer of a driven roller that is smaller than a coefficient of friction of an outer layer of a drive roller.

Thus, the combination of Fowler and Sako fails to disclose or render obvious the combination of above-mentioned features, because the nip portion contacts the leading edge of the sheet substantially at a point of the sheet when the leading edge of the sheet passed through the reading point collides against the nip portion, while the reading operation of the sheet is still in progress. Therefore, by disposing the drive roller and the driven roller at the immediate downstream side from the reading point, the impact on the sheet is greatly reduced and the reading operation can be maintained with stability.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn.

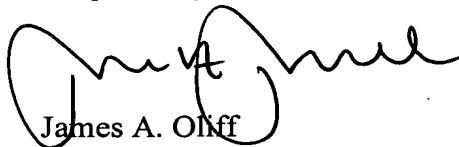
The Office Action rejects claims 18 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over JP 2001-310857 to Masaaki. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 18 calls for substantially the same features as discussed above with regard to independent claim 1. Masaaki fails to overcome the deficiencies of Fowler and Sako, as discussed above, because Masaaki is also silent with regard to whether the nip portion contacts the leading edge of the sheet while the reading operation of the sheet is still in progress. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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JAO:RHR/mcp

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